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DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND
POLICY COMMITTEE

November 5, 2009

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The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton,


I am writing to you to ask the State Department's help in the case of Ms. Berlanty Azzam, a 21 year old fourth year student at Bethlehem University in the West Bank who was detained, blindfolded and handcuffed, and deported to Gaza by the Israeli military on October 28. Ms. Azzam is only a few months away from completing her Bachelor's degree in business administration.

A petition arguing against Ms. Azzam's deportation has been filed in Israeli courts. The courts have ordered attorneys for the state of Israel to explain at a court hearing, scheduled for November 12th, why they deported Ms. Azzam to Gaza, given my understanding that she has committed no crime and has not been accused of being a security threat. She has not yet been returned to Bethlehem University, a Vatican-sponsored school.

Some Israeli officials have claimed that Ms. Azzam has no right to be at Bethlehem University in the West Bank because she does not have a permit allowing her to be there. Ms. Azzam did not need a permit to remain in the West Bank after entering in 2005 since no such kind of permit existed in 2005. Ms. Azzam only needed the Israeli permit in 2005 to cross through Israel from Gaza to the West Bank, which she received. Since that time, Ms. Azzam has been in Bethlehem, the West Bank and only seeks to be in the West Bank, not in Israel.

I urge you to request that the Israeli government allow this young woman to return to Bethlehem University to complete her studies. I believe permitting her to return to Bethlehem to complete her degree would be in the spirit of the "Agreement on Movement and Access" negotiated, with U.S. assistance, between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in 2005.

Sincerely,


James P. Moran